

PLANNING BOARD AGREES TO REVIEW TROLLEY:
OPEN HOUSE PRESENTATION SET FOR JUNE 10,
PUBLIC HEARING FOR JUNE 26, 27th

In the first step of the official review of the Bethesda - Silver Spring trolley, the Planning Board accepted a draft Master Plan amendment to allow trolley and trail use on the Georgetown Branch between the two Metro stations. An informal open house with detailed maps, drawings, and other information was scheduled for Saturday June 10 at the Planning Board auditorium on Georgia Avenue from 10 a.m to 1 p.m. Two weeks later the Board will hold a public hearing to receive public testimony.

The Board action followed release by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation of long-awaited cost figures to build the trolley. Opponents of the line had insisted that the cost would have tripled from the original estimate of \$45 million to \$100-150 million; but the total with added bridging, tunnelling, and other work came to \$73 million, with another \$10 million for the adjacent trail. This amount is consonant with the \$70 million that Governor Schaefer pledged for the construction of the trolley in March.

The public hearings will likely be well attended by opponents of the trolley, centered primarily around the Bethesda area. However ACT expects that Silver Spring and Chevy Chase will be respectably represented to support the trolley. The hearings will be held on June 26th and 27th in the evening, starting at 7 p.m. at the Planning Board auditorium on Georgia Avenue.

If there were only one time that you could testify, this would be the one! Simply standing up and saying that you support mass transit between Silver Spring and Bethesda would be enough; your presence is very important. You must be signed up by phone; either call 495-4600, or call Nick Brand (657-2547) or Harry Sanders (587-1323) who can sign you up in absentia.

METRO/MARC/RIDE-ON/METROBUS/TROLLEY TERMINAL
PLANS FOR SILVER SPRING DISCUSSED; WHEATON &
FOREST GLEN TO BE DEEPEST STATIONS ANYWHERE

At ACT's May meeting, County planning proposals for transit at Silver Spring and the specifics on parking, transit, and pedestrian access to the Wheaton and Forest Glen stations were presented. Ed Daniel, a long-time planner and administrator for the Washington area transit network, brought his latest thoughts, drawings and plans, and answered questions.

At Silver Spring, the entire layout of transit around the Metrorail station would be re-worked. The Metrorail station itself, which now is the second busiest station in the morning, with 30,000 commuters boarding every day, would essentially remain the same. However, the rail station (MARC) would be moved to just north of the subway station and would be connected to it by escalators and a walkway. The move would also put the MARC closer to the major new office buildings and reduce the need for special Ride-On buses to meet each train.

Since bus traffic is expected to grow, the existing bus areas would be expanded, with a possible decking over of the lower bays, and reconfiguration of the drop-off and taxi areas and acquisition of several adjacent properties. There will also be a new parking garage built at the south end of the Metrorail station as part of the NOAA development on the East-West Highway side of the rail station. The upper levels of the garage may be connected by a walkway over the station to the Georgia Avenue side; a third Metro entrance could be built as part of the project.

Finally, the Silver Spring - Bethesda trolley will stop at the south end of the Metro station on Bonifant Street, at the upper end of today's auto drop-off lot. The approval of the trolley would be the catalyst for much of the other work, Mr. Daniel said.

When the Red Line opens to Wheaton in September 1990, the Forest Glen station will be the deepest in the world and reached by elevators only. A 600 car parking garage is

(Continued on page 2)

STATION DESIGN (cont.)

being built on the west side of Georgia Avenue and sidewalk extensions are to be replaced throughout the area.

The Wheaton station will be the terminus of the Red Line for at least three or four years, until the Glenmont station can be opened. More than 1600 parking spaces will be built in two garages, and a bus terminal with 16 bays will be placed between Georgia and Viers Mill Drive.

The large number of parking spaces touched off a lively discussion on whether enough was being charged to park and whether feeder buses to the station run often enough. Although thirty minute service seemed inadequate to most of those present, a scarcity of funding means that a number of the new routes to the Wheaton terminal will run that infrequently. The parking charges of about \$2.50 daily were felt by Mr. Daniel to be in line with other parking in the area, and could not be raised unless the cost of parking at the work destination increased. Much of the recent increase in the fee is going to a fund to provide more parking at outlying stations.

Tom Fuchs was commended for having made the stimulating and informative session possible by inviting Mr. Daniel, and we look forward to having him back in six months to review further progress.

Action Committee for Transit
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COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE CRENCA TO SPEAK AT NEXT
ACT MEETING ON JUNE 14TH

The next ACT meeting, which will be held at the Silver Spring Community Center, at 8818 Georgia Avenue, across from the Park and Planning Building in Silver Spring, will feature a discussion of transportation and development issues with the one of the most influential council members on these issues, Rose Crenca. The meeting will begin promptly at 7:45 p.m. The regular business meeting will follow the discussion with Councilmember Crenca.

MAJOR CIVIC ASSOCIATION ALONG THE GEORGETOWN
BRANCH URGES CONSTRUCTION OF LIGHT RAIL LINE.

Rock Creek Forest Citizens' Association, covering some 800 households along the Georgetown Branch and East-West Highway, voted by a 10 to 1 margin to support the Bethesda - Silver Spring Trolley at its annual meeting last month.

The association also supported the building of a bicycle/walking path in conjunction with the trolley. They saw the combination providing additional public transportation, and reducing the rate of growth of traffic on East-West Highway.

SILVER SPRING-BETHESDA TROLLEY PLAN OK'D
BY PLANNING BOARD AND COUNTY EXECUTIVE;
COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING SET FOR
OCTOBER 17, 1989

With a ringing endorsement from the County Planning Board and the unequivocal support of the County Executive, the plan for the Bethesda - Silver Spring trolley was sent to the County Council for approval. At the key public hearings preceding these decisions, strong public support was given the trolley with about half of the speakers testifying in favor.

The new Planning Board Chairman, Gus Bauman, summed up the advantages of the trolley saying:

"The Silver Spring - Bethesda trolley, with tandem trail, provides a direct, convenient, rapid, quiet, non-polluting -- and charming -- link between the two downtowns, two communities, two Metrorail spokes that sorely need linking. This Plan proposes going back to the future because it seeks to move people, not cars."

Sid Kramer, County Executive, sent the Trolley Plan to the Council observing that the Georgetown Branch is needed for mobility and recreation, and that even in rain or snow "the trolleys will run safely and reliably, just as they did fifty years ago."

The final step to adopt the trolley Plan is a vote by the County Council. They have scheduled a public hearing on October 17 at 7:30 pm and will likely take a vote in November. As expected, the seven Council members are being vigorously lobbied by opponents of the trolley, who continue to hammer away at the same arguments used unsuccessfully in the past.

If there were only one time that you could attend a County Council hearing in Rockville, this would be the one! The format is a little different from the Planning Board, in that having a large number of supporters in the room will make a difference. Bring your friends and neighbors! If you want to testify you must be signed up by phone; call 217-7900, beginning Thursday morning Sept. 14. The address is 100 Maryland Ave., Rockville.

COMPREHENSIVE GROWTH STUDY FOCUSES ON TRANSIT
ROLE IN MANAGING GROWTH OF HOUSING AND JOBS

In August the Montgomery County Planning Board staff released a three-volume analysis of the relationship between growth and the transportation network. The study looked at four development scenarios and three alternative types of transportation improvement -- i) expanding the road network for the single-occupant car, ii) relying on car and vanpool improvements, and iii) implementing a 60-mile light rail network.

The study found serious congestion would result county-wide if very significant transit improvements were not implemented. Specifically the ridership of the light rail lines (including the Georgetown Branch) was found to be critical to avoiding gridlock.

The light rail lines in the analysis were:

- 1) Columbia to Bethesda via Silver Spring
- 2) Shady Grove to Frederick
- 3) Shady Grove to Twinbrook
- 4) Twinbrook to College Park
- 5) Twinbrook to Tysons Corner

ACT hopes to have a speaker from the Planning Board staff review the study and answer questions at the October meeting.

Incidentally, one of our members went to the briefing and reported that the ridership forecast in this scenario for the Georgetown Branch appears to be several times higher than the County's DOT's official estimate of 13,000 riders daily!

NEXT ACT MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 26, 7:45 PM.
The meeting will be held at the Silver Spring Community Center, 8818 Georgia Ave. Topics for discussion will be the upcoming hearings as well as news about the sidewalk planning efforts, upcoming bus changes, and we'll have a speaker on a subject of interest.

COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY ACTIVITIES BEING SOUGHT

For the last two years, Community Service Day has found ACT members and family cleaning up a portion of the Georgetown Branch. This year Tom Fuchs has been seeking to diversify, by finding organizations in Montgomery County which ACT members could help on the Day, Saturday, October 21. He is waiting for word from the Transportation Management District on what we might do, and has already heard back from the Trolley Museum. The non-profit Museum has invited ACT members to help them in refurbishing or maintaining their trolleys... For more information call Tom at 443-7151.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Ralph Braskett, one of ACT's newer members, would like to know if other members have observed problems of overcrowding similar to those he experiences on several Ride-On routes. He has seen standees on Routes 15, 16, & 20 as far East as University and Piney Branch in the PM RUSH on buses from Silver Spring.

In the short term, Ralph suggests more service during the peak and the "shoulder" right after the peak, perhaps with short turns. In the long run, he says, "a serious examination of overlaps between Ride-On and Metro routes both on the map and from O&D studies and rider counts" is needed, "with an eye to consolidation where possible.

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HEARINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Sidewalk planning committee

Where would transit be without sidewalks to provide safe access? Ben Ross has been spearheading ACT efforts to increase the County's funding for areas built without them in the last several decades. The County has on file many more requests to build sidewalks than it has funding to carry it out, resulting in waits of five years or more. Groups throughout the County that have already requested sidewalks are being invited to a meeting on September 25 to discuss common strategy. For more details call Ben Ross at 530-7610 at home.

Wheaton bus realignment meeting

August 1 Tom Fuchs attended a meeting at the County government center at Wheaton to discuss bus route changes to occur with the opening of Metro next year. The County is proposing changes similar to those which ACT suggested earlier this summer. New feeder buses would be provided along Kemp Mill Road, and Bonifant Road; new service would be added between Wheaton and Twinbrook and/or White Flint. Frequency is proposed to be increased on feeder routes, but less frequent service would run between Silver Spring and Wheaton, in order to not wastefully duplicate the Metro service. Public hearings are tentatively scheduled for December.